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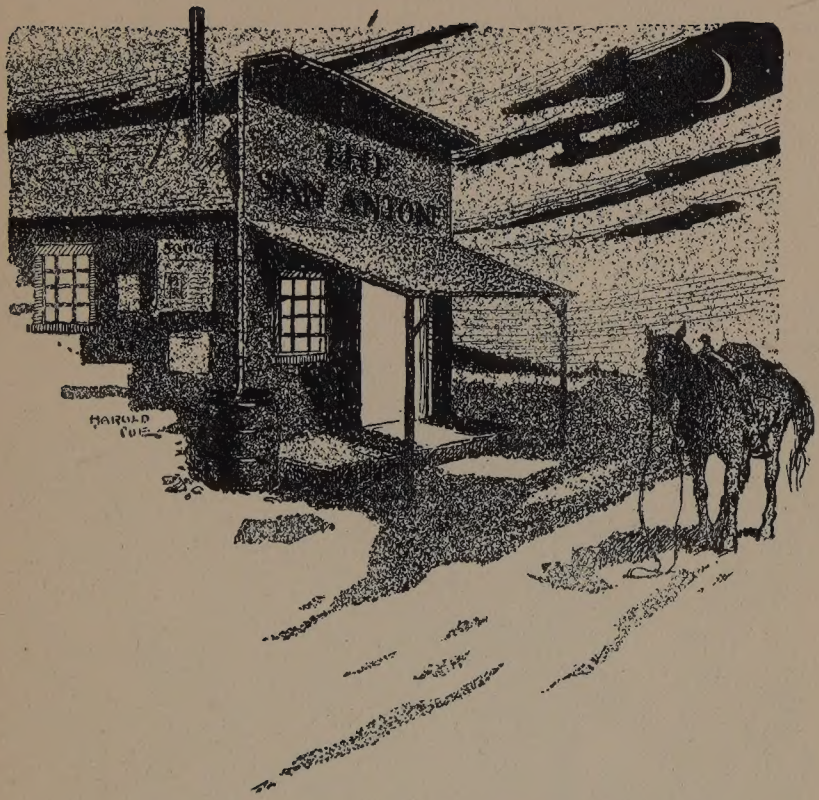
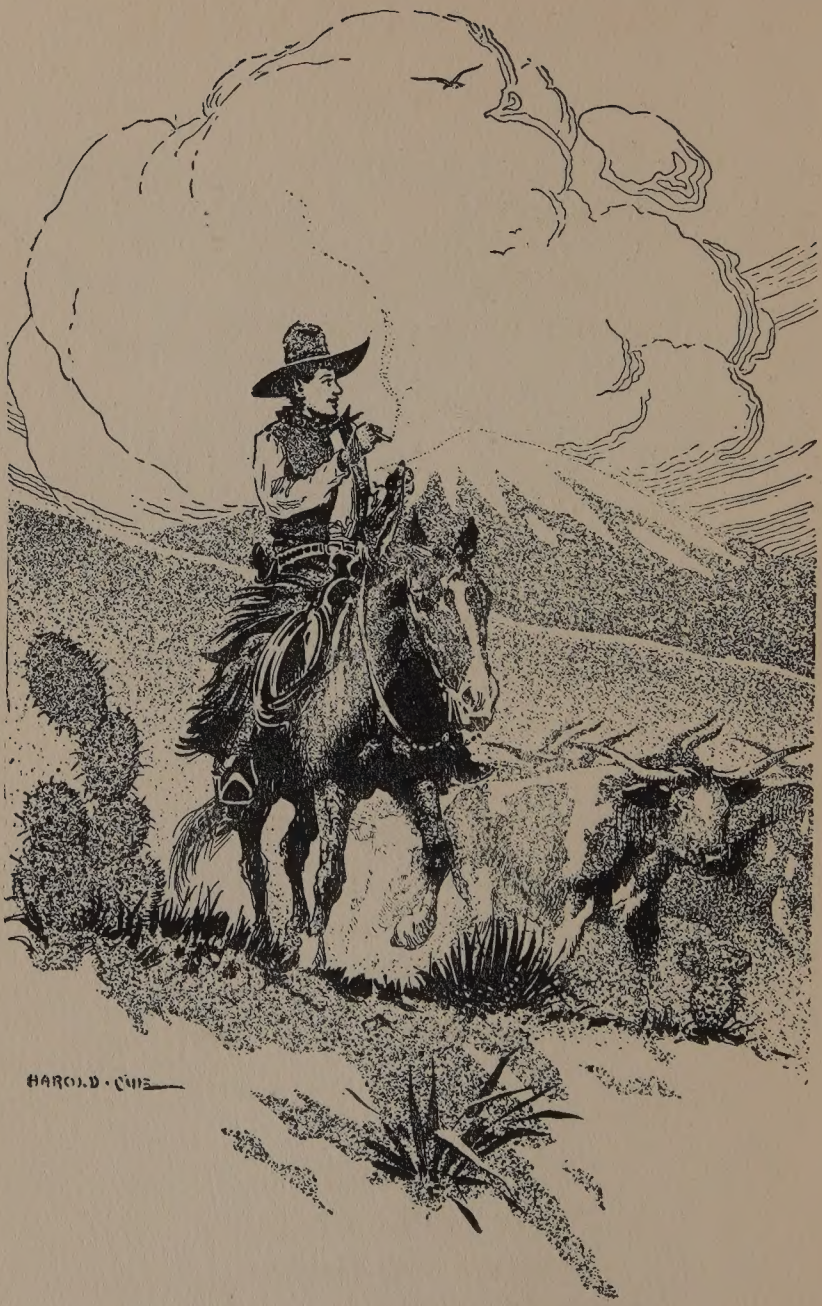


Cactus Center


HAROLD CUE

CACTUS CENTER

POEMS

By

Arthur Chapman

Author of "Out Where the West Begins"

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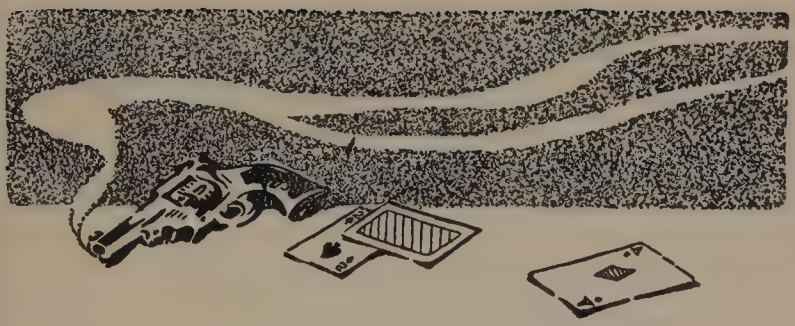
TO

MY WIFE

AND MY BOYS JOHN, ARTHUR, AND NEIL



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Thanks are tendered *Judge* and *The New York American* for permission to use two of the poems herein, which appeared originally in those publications.

JIM BRIDGER

All carelessly we travel o'er
The ways he trod alone;
The noisy wheels send forth their roar
Where he stood on that gleaming shore
And watched the salt waves thrown.

He saw the geysers gush on high,
Where gleam red canyon walls;
He saw the circling seagulls fly
Where all in vain the salmon try
To breast the thund'rous falls.

He scaled yon pass long ere the rails
Lay glistening on the heights;
Perhaps his wraith takes up those trails
And roams, until the starlight fails,
Through long and silent nights.

THE HOSS OF PECOS DOYLE

Now this is the tale of Pecos Doyle, of bad men quite the worst,
Who rode in town one winter night, surroundin' a ragin' thirst;
He'd done his sixty milè that day, and done it all alone,
And he left his sweatin' cowpony in front of the San Antone.

He left his pony standin' there, while he went clompin' in
And called fer whiskey, called fer beer, and likewise called fer gin;
And all that time the pony stood—it was a good old roan—
With the lines a-droppin' to its feet, in front of the San Antone.

And Pecos Doyle ripped out the oaths, as the strong drink worked in him,
And he shot out all the barroom lights because thèy was too dim.
And the tremblin' barkeep brought new lamps — you should hear him pray and moan —
And all the time that pony stood in front of the San Antone.

And Pecos Doyle broke up the games — they was mostly
games of chance! —
And he made a tenderfoot step high — 't was the bad
man's fav'rite dance;
And the night was wearin' on to dawn, and the marshal he
had flown —
And all the time that pony stood in front of the San Antone.

But some one punctured Pecos Doyle with a dainty forty-
five,
And, dead as lead, to the barroom floor he took a sprawlin'
dive;
And when they took him to Boot Hill — it claims such as
its own —
That pony of his was standin' there in front of the San
Antone.

They could n't drive the hoss away — it stood with droop-
in' head —
Till some one sez: "Well, dog my cats! This cowpony is
dead."
And now you 'll see a likker sign that turned, one night, to
stone,
Which same is the hoss that Pecos left in front of the San
Antone.

THE LEGEND OF THE SAGEBRUSH

When the Master Workman had done his task,
And smooth was the prairie floor,
He summoned a manling and thundered: "Ask,
If you wish to have one thing more."

And the manling answered: "Broad plains I see,
With a carpet of wondrous hue,
But naught to appeal to my memory
When I wander the wide world through."

So the Master Workman planted a brush
That gleamed like silver bright;
And he planted it where mad waters rush
And where the deer takes flight.

He scattered it far, and from it rose
A strange scent, all its own;
In summer-time, or in the snows,
Its deathless spell was thrown.

And those who have breathed this magic scent,
On the breast of a Western breeze,
Must turn, as an Arab to his tent,
Back home to the sagebrush seas.

JOURNALISM IN CACTUS CENTER

Down here in Cactus Center we ain't much on splittin' hairs;
In the fancy shades of language we are puttin' on no airs,
But we're shy one young reporter — it was strange how it occurred —
Who mussed up a brilliant future when he chose jest one wrong word.

He hustled local items for the "Stockmen's Weekly Star";
He was young and plumb ambitious, and he made friends near and far;
He never knocked nobody, but he allus tried to boost,
And we thought he'd make a wonder on the journalistic roost.

But he wrote, with good intentions, as most every one allows,
"Our townsman, Poker Johnson, has gone South to rustle cows";
He meant to say that Poker was a-roundin' up his brand,
For he did n't know that "rustle" meant to "thieve" in Cattle Land.

When Poker Johnson read it he put on an extry gun,
And he came to town a-frothin' with his bronco on the run;
The reporter got a warnin' and he hopped a cowboy's beast
And he started navigatin' for the calm and distant East.

We got old Poker quiet when he'd busted up the press,
And had shot holes in the sanctum and had made the type
a mess;
And we'd like a bright reporter who is broke to Western
slang —
No more such babes shall monkey with our newspaper she-
bang!

MOTHER WEST

THERE is a mother, legend runs,
Of mothers quite the best,
Who boasts ten million sturdy sons
'Twixt plain and mountain crest;
She gives of wealth a goodly store,
She gives abounding health — and more,
She opens wide contentment's door;
Her name is Mother West.

Oh, thou, whose bounties never fail,
We are thy children, blest;
To foreign shores we may set sail —
Our pilot strange unrest —
But still thy children turn to thee,
Thy plains, thy hills, thy mystery,
And at the last, from oversea,
Come home to Mother West!

GRADUATION DAY IN CACTUS CENTER

THE sharp who was expected to address our graduates
Missed the stage at Dead Horse Crossin', so we called in Texas Bates —
He had tried the higher learnin', 'fore he took to punchin' steers,
And he used a Sigma cowbrand, so we did n't have no fears.

"Kids," says Texas to the stoodents, "when you're goin' through this life,
Hit the trails that lead to quiet, and away from scenes of strife;
Don't git so you must smell powder 'fore you go to sleep at night —
Onc't a week is plenty often for a man to start a fight.

"Learn to read men jest like horses, by the rollin' of their eyes;
Keep a six-gun allus handy, jest to guard agin' surprise;

When you play cards, pick your comp'ny, and point out to each one there
That you'll call an undertaker if the game ain't on the square.

"And when you're runnin' cattle on life's broad and open range,
Keep a bite and sup for pilgrims that are homeless, cowed, and strange;
For if learnin' crowds out kindness the game ain't worth a rap —
And now amble up here, scholars, 'cause diplomers are on tap!"

CLASSIC DANCING IN CACTUS CENTER

Down here in Cactus Center we have lived a life apart;
We've been far, we're frank in sayin', from the headquarters of art;
Our work has kept us humpin', roundin' up the festive steer;
We admit that things æsthetic find us bringin' up the rear;
All of which has some small bearin' on a thing that's knocked us cold —
That has set the cowboys talkin' when the cigarettes is rolled,
And has proved to be the reason why the Two-Bar boss has swore
That this Terpsichory goddess gits his O K nevermore.

It started when a lady wrote Bear Hawkins from the East
That she'd like to rent a pasture, if he had one to be leased.
She said she wished to use it for her classic dancin'-school,
And Bear wrote back: "Dear madam, I am sure a locoed fool,

But I fail to see why pastures beat the schoolhouse dancin'-
floor,
Which, of course, it ain't my worry, as it's grass you're
payin' for;
So you'll find the pasture ready, right behind the main
corral,
And I speak up for some lessons for my old friend, Cattle
Sal."

Well, Bear's eyes stuck out like doorknobs when the
dancin'-school arrove,
And jest thirty-eight young women to the cattle ranch he
drove;
They was headed by a woman with a most determined
jaw —
The kind who, in all comp'ny, constitoots herself the
law;
And she said: "Now, Mister Hawkins, we have come here
to the West
To create some classic dances that will give our art new
zest,
For among these wild surroundings it will be no trick to
find
Some stunts to make Pavlowa fade from out the public
mind."

When Old Pete went out, next sunrise, for to rope his pinto hoss,
He thought he saw ghosts dancin', and he called upon the boss;
And the boss, though he'd been sober for a week, or maybe more,
Thought he must be seein' visions like he'd never seen before;
'Cause those dancers were disportin', all in robes of dazzlin' white,
And Old Pete says: "Boss, I'm quittin' — you kin pay me off to-night,
As it's me for Cactus Center, lest I feel disposed to prance
And to tramp down good alfalfa in this sort of classic dance."

Well, there was n't much work doin' in the round-up gang for days;
There was cows that went unbranded, and good steers was lost as strays;
The cowboys sat for hours on the top rail of the fence
And watched the classic dancers, as they flitted here and whence,

Till Bear Hawkins said: "Dear madam, you must sure detour your freight;
While we like your classic dancin', we must hand it to you straight
That you've got our punchers locoed, and the case is just this size:
You must quit this cattle country, or the price of beef will rise."

Though the leader was offended, Hawkins took his stand quite firm,
And the dancers started Eastward, cuttin' short their Wild West term;
But they've left a deep impression, and the boys don't give two hoots
In reels and clogs, and such things, for to agitate their boots;
And when the schoolhouse dances are given, now and then,
You can hear the whispered comments 'mong a lot of wallflower men,
And you know that they are talkin' of the palpitatin' days
When we got our introduction to the classic dancin' craze.

THE CALL

Some men must follow the sea,
And some must follow the plough;
But I must follow the cattle herds,
To the trill of the nesting prairie birds,
And the plains breeze on my brow.

Some men must follow the sword,
And some must follow the pen;
But I must follow the tossing horns
And ride, through still and starlit morns,
To my prairie home again.

Some men must follow the throng
That drifts through street and mart;
But I must follow the lonely way
Where the sage and the cactus flowers sway,
And sad is the cowboy's heart.

THE HEART-GIFT

(Lincoln Memorial is built of Colorado white marble)

Deep in the heart of the hills I slumbered
Through the still æons past;
Over me trod, in droves unnumbered,
Creatures uncouth and vast;
Then came the tread of the redskin o'er me —
Light as the wolf he crept;
And still from my couch no strong hands bore me —
Still in the hills I slept.

Then came the trapper, nor sought my whiteness,
And 'twixt yonder heights of snow,
Over the trail in its luring brightness,
I heard the great wagons go;
Yet never a one turned from the highway,
But always went on and o'er,
Whilst I, 'neath the trapper and redskin byway,
Slept through the new tide's roar.

But came a day when the hill was riven,
And white in the sun I gleamed,

The fairest thing from the mountains given —
Gold but a bauble seemed;
Now shall I stand, while the world grows hoary,
Builded to Lincoln's fame;
Gift of her heart — what greater glory
Shall the State of the High Peaks claim!

DAYLIGHT SÁVING IN CACTUS CENTER

Down here in Cactus Center we believe in savin' time;
Unlike the waste of powder, wastin' daylight is a crime;
So we held a solemn meetin', down in Poker Johnson's
place,
And agreed that here in Cactus every clock must change
its face;
"For," Bear Hawkins said, reflective, "it will give one hour
more
For the studyin' by sunlight of this here draw poker lore.
We are proud of all the sunshine that suffuses yonder
range;
If we was n't boosters for it, it'd be almighty strange."

But a shadder fell upon us when old Pegleg brought the
mail
And he stumped in, from his stage seat, with his customary
hail,
For he said, when we had told him of our daylight savin'
plan:
"This is rough on pore old Pegleg — you have got me on the
pan,

For they've just sent word from Lone Wolf that the old-time schedule stays,
And they say I'll run this bus line just as on all previous days,
So I'd like to have you tell me how I'll land among you here
At the time I'm leavin' Lone Wolf. Do I make my meanin' clear?"

We are peaceful here in Cactus — it takes lots to stir our ire —
But this impudence from Lone Wolf set our fightin' blood afire;
So we 'phoned the Two-Bar foreman, and the Star, and Lazy Y,
And we got word to the round-ups, and they let the brand-irons lie,
And the top hands come a-peltin' from the wide and dusty plain,
And we even took a sheepman, though it went against the grain.
Whereupon, when all assembled, we sent word: "Hunt trees to climb,
For we're comin' over, Lone Wolf, and we'll make you change your time!"

There's been battles over poker, there's been bloodshed
over booze,
There's been men who've gone to Boot Hill 'cause of
words that they would use;
Men have been turned into lead mines for remarks misun-
derstood;
Men who would n't drink have perished — men have died
because they would;
But the fight of fights was started when we entered Lone
Wolf's streets
And we carried daylight savin' to the uttermost retreats.
Though we lost some ten good gunmen, we was pleased, on
takin' stock,
When we found that we had shot holes in each laggin' Lone
Wolf clock.

CACTUS CENTER AND THE CENSUS

Down here in Cactus Center we've been hearin' cities roar
In disputin' census figgers — but we ain't a-feelin' sore;
We have n't growed in fashion that 'll cause the world surprise —
Things have somehow been against it, and that fact we recognize.

Our population's suffered from rows that we regret;
First was that there little mix-up when our blood was overhet
Jest because of slight misdealin' down to Poker Johnson's place,
When we buried seven cowboys all along of one small ace.

Then we lost out when that clean-up had been made on Cowthief Flat —
Thirteen rustlers had departed when we'd got quite through with that —
Such things make a drop in figgers when the census time draws near,
But our quality is better, so we face the slump with cheer.

It seems as if some rulin' ought to be made jest fer us,
Or fer any other village where the gunman likes to fuss;
We would break all census records if they'd figger up our kill,
And would only count the tenants of the graves upon Boot Hill.

CACTUS CENTER LEARNS SOMETHING

Down here in Cactus Center we are bogged in puzzlement;
A fashion question's got us where we're on the ropes, quite spent.
It was started by the schoolma'am, who has come here from the East;
Though it's long months since it hit us, the debate has never ceased;
It arose because last winter, when we grabbed the fur-lined coat,
The schoolma'am braved the blizzards with no wraps around her throat;
And now, when summer's with us, on the street she never stirs
Without her neck encircled with a full-sized set of furs.

We thought at first we'd buy her something for the winter's blast,
Thinkin' she was poor but prideful — but that fool idea soon passed,

For she froze our haltin' spokesman when the talk of furs
was broached,
And he beat it for the background, wishin' he had not ap-
proached.
When she bobbed up in the summer, wrapped up to her
saucy chin,
Then her sanity was questioned, and we voted it a sin
Not to put the poor weak critter in a padded-cell retreat,
Thus preservin' her from danger, first from cold and then
from heat.

But we sure was all dumfounded when a tenderfoot arose
And remarked, "You gents know cattle, but you don't
know women's clothes."
And he then went on to tell us that such doin's are the
style
In the land of the tall tepees and the crowded haunts of
guile.
He convinced the most progressive, but a faction still holds
out;
It's mostly the old-timers, and they shake their heads in
doubt
When the schoolma'am walks among us, with her fox furs,
on parade,
And the mercury jest touchin' eighty-seven in the shade!

CACTUS CENTER'S SEMI-CENTENNIAL

We've been plannin', here in Cactus, fer two months, or mebbe three,
On a proper celebration fer our anniversary;
It was fifty years, we figgered, since the foundin' of our town,
And our semi-centenary was a thing we done up brown.

First, we had a float a-bearin' 'Pache Pete, who settled here
When the rabbit and the rattler was 'most all that lingered near;
(Pete's some hairy, but his whiskers and the thatch upon his dome
Had been treated, by committee, to a dose of currycomb.)

Next, we had a float a-showin' how the old burg uster look
When 't was took up by Slim Burrows, now the Two-Bar round-up cook;
And the float that caught the cheerin', and made everybody point,
Was a replica (that 's proper) of the town's first poker joint.

We had other floats in plenty — even one that showed
Boot Hill —
And we had two bands of music, and a speech by Windy
Bill.
(He's the man we've sent to Congress), and you bet we
feel some proud,
Of our semi-centenary — and we're whoopin' it out loud.

EASTER IN CACTUS CENTER

You kin talk about your racin' with your horses neck and neck —
We have had one here in Cactus that 's the high card in the deck.
It was when a bunch o' punchers — must have been an even score —
Were competin' fer a sky-piece down in Morris Levy's store.

It was decked with loads o' flowers, and a full-grown tree or two,
With a string of clingin' ivy windin' up and down and through;
It had come clean from Las Vegas, fer old Levy had a hunch
That the school teacher would get it from the Cactus Center bunch.

Bud Ender reached the counter, in about one rabbit jump,
With the others clost behind him, in a howlin', cussin' lump;

Bud had paid two shinin' twenties, but he let it go at that,
Fer some hombrey broke the winder and stampeded with the hat.

Well, our shins was cruel punctured with each others' flyin' spurs
As we rushed out of the doorway fer to make that bonnet hers;
You could see the flowers noddin' on the head o' Skinny Sam,
And it looked like coin to doughnuts he'd be first to that schoolma'am.

But we heard a pony comin', and it passed us on a lope,
With Bear Hawkins in the saddle and a-swingin' of his rope;
He made a heel-cast perfect and old Skinny dropped, ker-thud!
With his head, in that there bonnet, buried deep down in the mud.

We are fine at mendin' saddles, and we're pretty fair on pants,
But at patchin' millinery we don't stand a two-spot chance;

So we chipped in, after seein' that we needed somethin' new,
And we sent two boys to Vegas jest to rush another through.

They killed off six cayuses, but they got back jest in time
With a sky-piece flower garden any girl'd think was prime;
But they spent all Easter cussin' — and small wonder that they did —
Fer the teacher'd gone a-vis'tin', and her mother got the lid.

CACTUS CENTER'S MARSHAL

We was troubled some in Cactus by a gent named Six-Gun Steve,
Whose disrespect for order made judicious people grieve;
He made a reg'lar practice of shootin' up our town
When the likker surged within him — and we could n't hold him down.

We hired famous gunmen, who vowed that they would stay,
But their usual term of office was a fraction of a day;
For Steve'd come a-lopin' when he heard of victim new,
And the marshal'd shuck his badges and'd skip the tra-la-loo.

We was sore and plumb disgusted, and we advertised in vain
For a scrapper who was equal to this son of war and pain;
But we could n't find nobody who would stand and take and give
When Six-Gun Steve served notice he would make such gent a sieve.

But at last we made Steve marshal, and he swelled up with
delight,
And he wounded six companions on his first official night;
He held the job down proper and he showed himself true
blue —
Which proved to us, past doubtin', what a little trust
will do.

DISCIPLINE IN CACTUS CENTER

We welcome folks in Cactus if they've got an honest lay;
If their game ain't too durn crooked, we never stop the play;
But a get-rich-quicker blew in, with a game we did n't like,
So we did n't waste the minutes in invitin' him to hike.

He advertised extensive in the papers 'way down East
That he run a school fer cowboys, and there were n't no bronco beast
That his graduates was 'feared of, and a feller was a fool
If he could n't learn rough ridin' in this correspondence school.

When Bear Hawkins heard about it, and about the tons of mail
The feller was receivin', his brown face near turned pale;
And he says: "Boys, now jest tell me, am I dreamin' or awake,
That our town of Cactus Center stands for any such raw fake?"

So we gathered on the quiet, and we yanked the feller out,
And we made him ride our broncos, till he'd qualified past
doubt
Fer the title of Perfesser, which we give him then and
there,
And we left him filled with needles from the festive prickly
pear.

CACTUS CENTER'S WAR TALK

Down here in Cactus Center we was called on by a gent
Whose lay was: "Preparation; or a Plea for Armament."
We turned out strong to hear him, fer he sure was known to fame,
And we welcome the distinguished and are glad to meet the same.
The sheepmen, 'crost the dead line, rode in forty miles or more,
And the cowmen sat beside 'em, with nobody gettin' sore.
We was out to be enlightened by this big man, heaven-sent,
Whose talk was: "Preparation; or a Plea for Armament."

He spoke to us two hours on diplomacy and war;
He talked of Europe's battles, till we heard the cannon roar;
He talked of gallant birdmen, and of dreaded submarines,
And of all the things that enter into modern war machines;
And he says: "If war should hit us, right this instant, while I talk,
We would have to fight with popguns, and with bullets made of chalk;

For where, in all this nation, could we find men armed to
kill?
Just answer that!" he hollers, and the hall become quite
still.

It was still for thirty seconds, or perhaps 't was forty-five,
When Bear Hawkins rose up, slowly, and he says: "We
allus strive
To answer any question, so we'll show what might depend
On this town of Cactus Center if a war note e'er was
penned."
Then we all stood, poco pronto, and en massy, and all that,
And in each hand, upward pointed, was a large and deep-
voiced gat,
And we fired a rousin' volley — and out the window went
The dad of "Preparation; or a Plea for Armament."

POLO IN CACTUS CENTER

Down here in Cactus Center we are allus up-to-date,
But we don't go in for polo — you kin put that down quite straight;
For our townsfolk's jest recovered from a hossback shinny game
And there's sev'ral of us thinkin' we will never look the same.

It was introdooced in Cactus by a stranger from the East
Who said the cowboy's pony was the ideal polo beast;
He picked two teams of players from the Bar X and our town,
But he did n't check their gatlin's — and right there the sharp fell down.

Bear Hawkins hit a whizzer that stung Poker Johnson's hand,
And Johnson, with his mallet, sent Bear off to slumberland;
But the other Hawkins brother comes a-lopin' with a gun —
And the crowd jest up and vamosed while the players had their fun.

There was seven wounded players on a torn and bloody
field,
And the polo-playin' stranger in a deathlike faint was
keeled;
So we've shipped our mallets eastward, or consigned 'em to
the flames —
Good old poker's plenty peaceful, side of polo and such
games.

THE NOVELIST IN CACTUS CENTER

We was visited, in Cactus, by a classic-featured gent,
Who said he was a writer, and informed us he was bent
On securin' local color for a novel of real life
Where the picturesque cowpuncher wins the schoolma'am for a wife.

So we took him to the Bar X, where we told the writin' chap
That he'd find real Western color ever ready and on tap,
And the foreman, Waco Roberts, made him slave the livelong day
Fixin' irrigatin' ditches, and a-feedin' stock with hay.

He hustled wood for fires, till his arms was 'most broke off,
And he hollered at the milch-cows till he nearly got a cough;
And when he says: "Beg pardon — but trot out your Western biz,"
Old Waco says: "Keep workin' — this is all the West there is.

"Fer it's time to teach you writers," goes on Waco, speakin' stern,
"That the lane of Western fiction is 'most due to take a turn;
There ain't no hullsale shootin's allus goin' on out here,
'Cause the bad men up and vanished when we lost the old frontier.

"So," said Waco, "jest keep workin', and a-workin' nail and tooth,
Till you're sure that, when you're writin', you can tell the world the truth";
But that night the writer vanished, and the Bar X was forsook,
And we're wonderin', in Cactus, if he'll ever write his book.

NATURE-FAKING IN CACTUS CENTER

We pride ourselves, in Cactus, on our powers of reserve;
From conservatism's pathway it is seldom that we swerve;
But we did show some slight temper when a chap from 'way back East
Give a lecture that he labeled: "What I know of Bird and Beast."

He had mastered, so he told us, all the talk of prairie dogs,
And had heard their conversation while he hid behind some logs;
He had studied kyote music (here all Cactus held its breath)
And he'd seen a mountain sheeplet butt a grizzly to death.

But he capped the evenin's climax when he read from out a book
'Bout a burro and an owl that he said knowed how to cook;
Whereupon we rose instanter, and we chased him seven mile,
And no other nature-faker need apply round here meanwhile.

THE DEBATE IN CACTUS CENTER

Down in Poker Bill's old 'dobe, we was talkin', gent to gent,
On the subject of employment for our next ex-president;
We was sure that writin' stories would n't suit no such as he,
And at last on punchin' cattle we was ready to agree.

"The cow biz," says Bear Hawkins, "shore will test a feller's worth;
It 's the noblest occupation on this good old Mother Earth;
And it 's good enough for presidents, and it 's good enough for kings,
And I'm here to back my say-so with the gun or knife, by jings!"

But while we all applauded, Loco Jackson, near the door,
Sez: "I see that I'm outnumbered, but I've gotter have my roar;
When it comes to occupations that ex-presidents should foller
The game of herdin' woollies skins the cowboy game all holler!"

Well, we set there quite dumfounded while the snoozer had his say,
And he'd slid out in a minit, and had made his getaway;
And it discomposed the talkers, did the sheepman's jarrin' note,
So the dee-bate's still onsettled — for we clean fergot to vote!

GOLF IN CACTUS CENTER

We was propped against the 'dobe of that joint o' Poker Bill's
When a tenderfoot was spotted, actin' queer-like in the hills;
He'd a ball of gutta-percher, and was puttin' in his licks
Jest a-knockin' it to glory with a bunch of crooked sticks.

Well, we went up there quite cur'us, and we watched him paste the ball,
Till a-itchin' fer to try it seemed to git a-holt of all;
And at last Packsaddle Stevens asked to give the thing a swat,
And we gathered round to see him show the stranger what was what.

Well, the golfer stuck the spheeroid on a little pile o' dirt
And Packsaddle swiped and swatted, but he did n't do no hurt;
He barked his shins terrific, and he broke his little stick,
And when he heard a snicker, his guns come out, too quick.

We dropped behind some cactus, with some holes clipped
in our clothes,
While the golfer fer the sky-line wagged his checker-
boarded hose;
And when we took home Stevens, and three others that
was hurt,
That golf ball still was settin' on its little pile of dirt.

So we ain't no new St. Andrews, and we hope no golfer
thinks
He can cut loose here in Cactus with a set of oatmeal links;
We go in fer games that's quiet, and stir up no blood and
fuss,
And down in Cactus Center poker's good enough fer us.

CACTUS CENTER'S TELEPHONE GIRL

THERE's a telephone in Cactus — it's a new, long-talk machine,
And the girl who operates it is a reg'lar fairy queen;
The comp'ny sent her in here fer to run the thing in style,
And she's got the cowboys locoed, clear from here to Forty-Mile.

She wears a janglin' bracelet, and a rollin' mass o' hair,
And when good looks were passeled she was handed out her share;
She sets there in her glory, in her awe-inspirin' togs,
And she knows that she's the ruler in this land of prairie dogs.

The boys they come a-ridin', from the corners of the range,
And they moon around in Cactus, and they're actin' mighty strange;
They have cut out cyards and drinkin', and they make a plumb mean fuss
If some puncher, who's forgitful, rips a loud, resoundin' cuss.

They flock up to the office, and they spend their hard-
earned dough
A-phonin' off to cities where there ain't no folks they
know;
It 's money fer the comp'ny, but it breaks the boys like sin,
Fer, onlike their gamblin' pastimes, there is nary chance to
win.

So, onless the girl flits Eastward, there'll be trouble here
this fall,
Fer the round-up season 's comin' and we can't git help at
all;
It 's tough luck, ain't it, pardner, when one woman, in her
pride,
Gits a county full of cowboys roped and throwed, and then
hog-tied!

THE PEACE CONFERENCE IN CACTUS CENTER

We've been visited in Cactus by a most smooth-spoken gent,
Who upon a holy mission of promotin' peace was bent;
He had jest come back from Yurrup, and, to keep themselves from harm,
He'd advised the scrappin' nations to be friendly and disarm.

Well, he told us we should foller out that same most lovely rule,
And should shuck our stock of Gatlin's while we let our passions cool;
And he talked so blamed persuadin' that Bear Hawkins rose the while
And tossed out his old six-shooter as the noocleus of a pile.

We all lined up on the platform, and we slung our hardware there,
While the gent of peace was smilin' and a-smoothin' his back hair;

And he sez, when we was ended (in each hand he flashed a pop):
"Face the wall — hands up, you school kids; bear in mind I've got the drop!"

Then a nifty young assistant stepped right out upon the scene,
And no road agent worked faster or could do his work more clean;
Then he sacked our guns and vamosed, and the spieler, slick as grease,
Paused a moment, 'fore he follered, and yelled: "What a joy is peace!"

CACTUS CENTER AND THE PLANET MARS

A STRANGER blowed in Monday, on the stage from 'crost Three Bars,
With materials fer talkin' to the distant planet Mars;
He'd heard about our climate, with its air so thin and dry,
And he 'lowed that right in Cactus he could catch some Martian's eye.

He explained his scheme in detail, and unpacked his big machine —
A telescope, some cog wheels, and a head-cloth made of green;
We was all enthoosiastic, and we helped him set the truck,
But the game was knocked plumb sideways by some unexpected luck.

It happened that Bear Hawkins had set out in search of play —
When he gits his share of moisture, Bear is apt to feel that way —

He clattered down the main street, with his bronco on a lope,
And he caught the sky perfesser in a whirlin' noose of rope.

He dragged the Mars machin'ry out acrost the prairie floor,
And the telescope was busted, and the cog wheels cogged no more;
He apologized, plumb handsome, when he sobered up next day,
But he had to write his sorrow, 'cause the highbrow'd gone away.

THE COUNTRY UPLIFT IN CACTUS CENTER

SENCE the Country Life Commission called upon our rival town
There's a heap of old-time notions that'll nevermore go down;
We've cut out the type of rancher — and of all types he's the worst —
Who thinks that irrigatin' means a-quenchin' of his thirst.

We have told our shootin' sheriff of our back-to-natur' needs,
And he's used the hoe, promisc'us, on our growth of human weeds;
We have closed the gamblin' places, and the good-bye sign we slips
To the youth whose springtime fancy lightly turns to poker chips.

We have had a hoss-thief raisin', and the neighbors all agree
That a more upliftin' session this here place will never see;

And we've planted, sence we started, sev'ral pairs of high-heeled boots,
All the pairs containin' Trilbies of our gun-fightin' galoots.

So we've put our bid in heavy fer free seeds from Uncle Sam,
And we're goin' to have a college and an irrigatin' dam;
We'll show 'em that fer farmin' that is scienced and 'way up
Cactus Center's got the deadwood on that measly Spotted Pup.

CACTUS CENTER'S BEAUTY SQUAD

We have heard, down here in Cactus, how they want some handsome men
As a 'naugeration escort when March Fourth arrives again;
And we want to say, "Quit lookin'," fer there ain't, above the sod,
Any bunch of handsome hombreys that can touch our beauty squad.

There's Bear Hawkins and his brother — him we call the Gila Kid —
Neither one wears shirts that dazzles, nor a shiny stovepipe lid;
Bear is shy some fingers, mebbe, but you bet his chin ain't weak,
And the Gila Kid is handsome when he turns his scarless cheek.

There's Poker Bill, who's slender and as languid as a girl —
Them hands can sling revolvers in the fancy double whirl —
And fer beauty that's more rugged there's old Jim who drives the stage;
Plain alkali's his powder, and his fav'rite scent is sage.

Though we don't wear golden medals that was give at
beauty shows,
Though we don't sport patent leathers, and we're shy of
evenin' clothes,
Though there ain't no dudes in Cactus — leastways none
that we can catch —
We can hold our own, we're thinkin', in this beauty-seekin'
match.

AVIATION IN CACTUS CENTER

We have got a club in Cactus called the Conquerors of Air;
It's for boostin' aviation, so its members all declare;
It meets and drinks and argues till it gits all overhet,
But, so far as we've observed it, there ain't been no flyin' yet.

They have had a play and smoker, fer to decorate their hall;
They have took up cash subscriptions, and they've give a fancy ball;
And, as far as people know of, they have paid off every debt,
But, unless they've kept it quiet, there ain't been no flyin' yet.

They have showed us movin' picters, and they're takin' magazines
That are full of information 'bout the latest sky machines;
But we have to hunt a hoss-race when we want to place a bet,
'Cause our Cactus aviators have n't aviated yet.

THE TARIFF IN CACTUS CENTER

We've observed, down here in Cactus, all this tariff-fixin' talk —
How some fellers want it lowered on steel rails and hides and chalk;
And we had, the other evenin', a dee-bate hard to beat,
Deuce Biddle havin' challenged the views of Standpat Pete.

They talked till well towards mornin' about the tariff rates —
Of tacks and soap and frogs' legs, of pups and chicken crates,
Of Swiss cheese, tin and leather, of canned goods, glass and furs,
Of saddles, chaps and headgear, of hoss shoe nails and spurs.

There was n't hard words spoken until the Standpat gent
Remarked Deuce did n't savvy what "ad valorem" meant;

And Deuce said "ad valorem" was the Injun name for
hoss,
And Standpat gives a hee-haw, and then lead begins to
cross.

They shot holes in each other, and they won't be out fer
weeks;
They wounded Bill, the barkeep, and his barroom's full of
leaks;
And we feel right now in Cactus that the tariff's mostly
right,
But the rates on shootin' irons should be raised clean out of
sight!

CACTUS CENTER'S SKY PILOT

Down here in Cactus Center we have had a sudden shock —
A preacher dropped among us and he never stopped to knock;
He was certainly persuasive with his linguistic stunts
And announced 't was his intention fer to start a church at once.

We did n't rally to him in the way that good men should,
But he never seemed to mind it, and jest kept on sawin' wood;
He tried to raise some money from the crowd at the Lone Star,
But the stream of cash kept flowin', undisturbed, acrost the bar.

At last, one mornin' early, he got out and shucked his coat,
And we seen him there a-toilin' like a busy billy goat;
He was ras'lin' with some timbers, and he told Tombstone Malone
He was goin' to build that buildin' if he done it all alone.

Well, the news spread 'round like lightnin', and it made us all ashamed;
Such courage touched our heartstrings, and one says, "Well, I'll be blamed,
Here goes my month's pay, pardners, in my old white Stetson hat —
Now chip in strong, you fellers — Cactus Center's at the bat!"

So we took up fourteen hundred, and the promise of some more,
And when we give it to him he was tickled to the core;
And he lit out, late that evenin' — short, indeed, he made his call —
And we found that we'd been buncoed — he had never preached at all.

But we're game, down here in Cactus, and we did n't squall nor howl,
We did n't shed tears salty, and we did n't roar nor growl;
We finished up the buildin' — quittin' then'd been too small —
And a real sky-pilot's with us, so we won out, after all.

ARBOR DAY IN CACTUS CENTER

JEST to please our latest schoolma'am we decided, weeks ago,
That we'd have a tree in Cactus, and we'd prove that one could grow;
So we had one freighted to us, and the irrigation bill
Was soon paid fer by subscription, at so much per runnin' gill.

We was lookin' and admirin' when the freighter dumped the tree
Down at Poker Bill's emporium, and the talk got flowin' free,
'Cause Bear Hawkins says 't was elder, and Spud Jones says cottonwood,
And they got to argumentin' as no peaceful hombreys should.

Well, the rest of us got mixin' in the Arbor Day dispute,
And, as natural as eatin', every man begins to shoot;
We had clipped the wings of sev'ral, and a Jap bystander dies,
'Fore we called in all the Gatlin's and agreed to compromise.

Then we waited on the teacher, and we told her, with regrets,
We'd agreed to go on treeless, and had called off all the bets,
Fer we had a man to bury, and the voice of Cactus said
That tree-plantin' was too dang'rous — so we'd plant the Jap instead!

CACTUS CENTER'S FIRE BRIGADE

We organized, in Cactus, a firemen's brigade;
We sent and got an engine, and we had a big parade;
We all got our instructions as to what we was to do
When we heard our captain's summons fer the fire-fightin' crew.

We did n't have to wait long — in the middle of the night
The fire demon broke loose, and we tumbled out to fight;
The captain, a Down-Easter, reached the shed at the first clang,
But there was n't nary helper fer to run with the shebang.

He waited, and he waited, and his cussin' solos rose;
Five minutes passed, then seven, and the fire brighter glows;
At last there comes a-whoopin' and an awful clatterin' noise,
And down the street — on hossback — comes the vanguard of the boys.

Their excuses never varied — they had turned their broncos loose,
And of course it takes some minutes fer to saddle a cayuse;

But at last the chorus dwindled when this one remark was put:
"Why in thunder, all you fellers, could n't you have come on foot?"

It was jest because, as cowmen, we had saddled without thought,
Fer cowmen hate all footwork if there's hosses to be caught;
So we turned and rode back, silent, while our captain fetched a shout,
Fer we'd missed our chance fer glory, as the fire had gone out.

CACTUS CENTER'S SLOGAN

We feel that Cactus Center is the Southwest's nat'ral hub,
So we organized, fer boostin', a Young Men's Commercial Club;
Our leadin' gamblers joined it, and the barkeeps done the same,
And the cowmen come a-runnin' fer to help the boostin' game.

We was all enthoosiastic when we met to launch the thing,
And the talks was mild and gentle, with no controversy's sting,
Till some kyote said 't was needful, and he volunteered the steer,
That we have some kind of slogan fer to catch the public ear.

The suggestions come a-pourin' from all quarters of the hall,
Such as "Cactus Center Cackles" and "Hear Cactus Center's Call."
And some yelled fer one suggestion, and some clamored fer a vote,
And the chairman jumped the meetin' with a bullet through his coat.

So we've left the matter standin', in a sort of statu quo,
Which is what the ancients called it when the wheels refused to go;
We are back to simpler problems, such as card hands and their powers,
And we'll leave the slogan question to more peaceful burgs than ours.

DIVORCE IN CACTUS CENTER

Down here in Cactus Center we ain't herded much in schools —
We don't know no college rahrahs, but we ain't a bunch o' fools;
And you bet no legal lighters can come here and hem and haw
And heel-rope us and hog-tie us in the meshes of the law.

The last galoot who started fer to run a crooked course
Was the lawyer fer old Squaw Bill, in a suit fer a divorce;
Old Bill's a teepee Yankee, and he thought he'd try the law
Fer to shake his lovin' woman — a poor Jicarilla squaw.

When the case come up fer hearin', Ol' Bill, who's struck it rich,
Sat behind the shifty lawyer who set out to break the hitch;
The squaw can't talk no English, but jest sprawls there on the floor,
A-nursin' one wee infant, and a-quietin' two more.

Well, the lawyer proved it backwards, and no doubt he proved it straight,
That there were n't no legal marriage, and Ol' Bill could pull his freight;
And the squaw, she can't say nothin', but jest sets there in a fog,
With her eyes all bright and swimmin', like a starved and kicked cur-dog.

Well, the court took an adjournment, and Bill's lawyer shook his hand
And said: "We've won it, Willum, by the laws of this here land";
But the Injun woman set there, with her baby at her breast,
Till Bear Hawkins up and hollered: "Hang the law — the right is best!"

So we gathered in Squaw Willum and his high-priced legal shark,
And we stood Bill on a barrel, all the same's a hangin' lark;
And we said we'd kick the staves in, 'less he swore that he 'd be true
To the Jicarilla lady, which he said that he would do.

And when Willum and his fam'ly started out fer their home
tent,
We set the lawyer peltin' down the back-trail, jest hell-
bent;
Fer your Blackstone 's poor pertection, though your books
may weigh a ton,
When the other cause is righteous, and is backed up with a
gun!

VALENTINE DAY IN CACTUS CENTER

THINGS is quiet, here in Cactus, and our bullyvards now lack
The brisk, upliftin' infloo'nce of the forty-five's loud crack;
There's three doctors and some nusses, all the way from San Antone,
And they're patchin' up the leavin's of a Valentine cyclone.

It was all because Bear Hawkins, who's some clever with the pen,
Drew a bunch o' comic picters of our foremost fightin' men;
He cartooned Windy Porter as a sheep in cowboy's clothes
And he handed worse to others 'fore he hails the stage and blows.

It was n't many minutes 'fore the post-office was filled
With a seethin' bunch a-thirstin' fer to see an artist killed;
They did n't think o' Hawkins, fer he'd covered up his play,
So they fell to argumentin', in a gin'ral sort o' way.

They wrecked the gov'ment boxes, and they bloodied up
the floor —
It was freshly laid with sawdust, and the P.M. ripped and
swore —
And they used the doors and shutters and then tore the
big sign down
Fer to bear away the wounded when the smoke had left the
town.

So we ain't too strong in Cactus on this comic picter biz,
And we're waitin' fer Bear Hawkins jest to tip off where
he is,
But he keeps hisself in hidin', though he sent us this one
line —
"I still love you, Cactus Center — won't you be my valen-
tine?"

THE FREIGHTER

THERE's a desert stretchin' on before,
And desert stretchin' on behind;
It's camp here on the desert floor
And eat my beans and bacon rind;
I've done jest thirty miles to-day —
Four horses ploughin' through the dust;
There ain't no words left fer to say —
No cuss words that I've left uncussed.

The road ain't any bullyvard —
It's jest a whisper, or a hint;
It's skid, with brakes a-squealin' hard,
Down canyon sides as hard as flint;
The sands are deep as human sin,
But I have got to put her through
In storms, or suns that peel the skin —
Envy the freighter's job — hey, you?

THE SHEEPMAN'S STORY

THERE's a nester at the water hole —
He's drove his homestakes deep,
And we must move acrost the plain —
Me and three thousand sheep.

Fer me and Mr. Nester Man
Talked sassy yesterday —
A conversation in which guns
Had quite a lot to say.

"Move on," a zippin' bullet sings,
A-flyin' past my head;
"I'll stay awhile," I answered back
In form of moulded lead.

But when night come we quit our talk,
And I set down to think,
And then I knowed that I must hunt
Some other place to drink.

I knowed the old sheep range was doomed —
I'd lingered there too late;

The homesteader must have his way —
'T is in the book of fate.

So when the mornin' broke again
I slung a flag of truce,
And me and Mr. Nester talked
And drank of friendship juice.

He let the sheep band have its fill,
And then I said good-bye,
And trailed the herd, with old Shep's aid,
To some more friendly sky.

Where are we goin'? — well, that's hard —
It stumps me, I confess;
There ain't no place that welcomes lambs
But old Wall Street, I guess!

THE LAST DRIFT

I'VE sold the old ranch, stock and all,
And let my cowboys go;
I'm driftin' into town this fall,
'Long with the first deep snow;
I've stuck it out, the last cowman
'Twixt here and Painted Stone;
For forty years — a healthy span —
I've fought my fight alone.

I've fought the northers and the sheep,
I've won, and lost, and won;
But every year, at spring's first peep,
The old chuck wagon'd run;
Now it has vanished, with the rest —
Its round-up days are o'er —
The range is gone — I s'pose it's best —
And fate has closed the score.

Last night I dreamed of olden days,
When cattle roamed the hills
And cowboys rode the prairie ways —
No more their presence thrills —

I saw the moon shine through a rift,
On him who stood night guard,
But woke to find that I must drift,
Though driftin's hard, plumb hard!

THE ART STUDENT

The Kid has quit the ranch, doggone it all!
It don't seem like the same old lively place;
There ain't no music in the spring bird's call;
The animals all seem to miss his face;
His pony's runnin' round the big corral,
And lookin' wistfully between the bars;
The foreman's moonin' jest like any gal,
Because the Kid's struck eastward on the cars.

He sketched a bit — and he was clever, too —
He made the round-up wagon and the boys;
You oughter seen the purty things he drew,
And slingin' paint was chief of all his joys;
But he could twirl the rope the handiest
Of any puncher on this cattle range;
No bronk could throw him — he was sure the best;
To see him pullin' leather'd be strange.

But now he's gone, with store clothes on his frame
Instead of leather pants and flannel shirt;
He's gone to make himself an honored name;
We know he'll win — but, friend, our hearts are hurt;

We're sad at losin' him, so clear of eye,
So willin' when it come to play his part,
E'en though we know he'll rope, and not half try,
That buckin' bronco known to men as Art!

THE FIFTY-EIGHTER

(*After Bret Harte*)

"I CAME," said the stranger, "in fifty-eight—"
Cried the Denverite, "Say no more,
But rest thee, grizzled pioneer,
And tell me of days of yore."

"'T was fifty-eight," the stranger said;
Cried the Denverite, "Nay, no more —
But eat your fill at my humble board
While you tell me of scenes of gore.

"No doubt you fought with the redskin horde
Encamped on the raging Platte;
No doubt you've slain the buffalo
On the site of this six-room flat."

"Not on your life," said the aged man;
"I tempted no such fate,
But crossed the plains a week ago
In freight car fifty-eight."

Then the Denverite said him never a word,
But smote with his fist the pate
Of the tramp who had crossed the Western plains
In freight car fifty-eight.

HOMESICKNESS

The sagebrush ain't a handsome plant —
  Its odor can be beat;
But when you're gone away from it
  The sage is mighty sweet;
You recollect the wide expanse
  Of silver-covered plain,
And jest for one more sight of it
  You'd trade your fields of grain.

The cactus ain't a lovely flower,
  Competin' with the rose,
But when you're miles and miles away
  You want it, goodness knows;
You'd wear it, spikes and all, upon
  The lapel of your vest,
Because it brung to you a hint
  Of your brave, open West!

A FRONTIER DRAMA

CHUCKWALLA CHUCK was a bold, bad man,
And he packed a brace of guns;
He had notched the same for Daring Dan
And a host of other ones;
All people feared this bully great,
Who swaggered through the town;
And even the sheriff pulled his freight
And hit for the prairie brown.

But a tenderfoot struck the town one day —
A wizened, mild-faced cuss,
And he got in the Chuckwalla person's way
And invited a powder fuss;
We tried to hustle him out of range,
But he simply would n't go,
And said he'd stick — though we thought it strange —
To the very end of the show.

Did we carry the chap to the railroad train
On a stretcher made from a door?
Did we fan a brow that was drawn with pain,
And bandage a frame that was sore?

Did we write to his folks how it came to pass
That lead in their boy was hid?
Did we say he was n't in Chuckwalla's class?
You bet your life we did!

THE HILL-MAN'S LULLABY

The city's fine and purty
With its blaze of 'lectric lights,
Though the starlit mountain reaches
Are more beautiful o' nights;
But the thing I miss most frequent
Ain't the clear and smokeless sky,
But the startin' up, at evenin',
Of the kyote's lullaby.

I allus know it's bedtime
When I hear that lonesome yip —
As a curfew the gray skulker
Never's known to make a slip —
And I toddle to my blankets
When them mournful notes float by
And the hills fling back the echoes
Of the kyote's lullaby.

Here there ain't no friendly warnin's
Sent by critters of the wild,
And there ain't no bedtime summons
Fer the grown-up or the child;

THE HILL-MAN'S LULLABY

I'll be glad when through the silence
I kin hear that welcome cry,
And I sink to dreamless slumber
To the kyote's lullaby.

AN OKLAHOMA REMINISCENCE

SHE's standin' there, by the pasture fence, crippled and old and gray —
The nag that carried me in the race on the April openin' day;
Come here, old gal — yes, here's a lump to sweeten that bit of hay.

Just sixty mile we rode,—us two, hittin' an unmarked trail,
For the gun had popped and the mob was off, and it was n't no time to fail,
With the competition a-comin' fast, right there at the good mare's tail.

I'd had my eye on this favored spot, and I knowed, with a fair, square shake,
I could reach it fust from the nearest point, and drive my own homestake,
But a cowboy stuck at my gray mare's side like he loved her for old times' sake.

He was ridin' a down-east runnin' hoss, with legs like a
clump o' stilts,
But I slammed the quirt to the good gray mare, and the
down-east hoss jest wilts,
With the cowboy diggin' him with both spurs, clean up to
the bloody hilts.

Well, he seen he was gone, and he drew and shot, and the
gray mare groaned and fell,
And I set up slow in the prairie grass, with a head like a
ringin' bell,
But I plugged the man as he passed me by, and he cashed
in with one word: "Hell!"

I finished the ride on the down-east hoss, but I soon rode
back from my land,
And I cared for the crippled mare as I should — here, girl,
there's more in my hand —
And I allus will, as long as she lives, which fact you can
understand.

THE RATTLESNAKE

No craven, thou, all silently to strike
When man goes by;
Thou biddest all whose mien thou dost not like
To come not nigh.

Thy pulsing rattles sound a hard alarm
That all may heed;
War 's not thy choice — to do no mortal harm
Is all thy creed.

And yet how swift, when battle must be done,
Those white fangs flash;
And, striking home, how soon your vict'ry 's won
From foeman rash.

And so, move on, thou hero of the plain!
Thou art secure,
For I am short — confession gives me pain —
Of snakebite cure.

THE REMITTANCE MAN

Nobody seemed to know him, and nobody seemed to
care
To ask him where he come from — perhaps we did n't
dare;
He dwelt alone and silent away up on the hills;
He never done no ranchin' — but he allus paid his bills.

He rode the best of hosses and he kept a huntin' pack,
But no one spent an evenin' up yonder in his shack;
Some said back there in England he had been a dook or
earl,
And had met a disapp'intment at the hands of some fair
girl.

It sounded sorter likely, he was so durn distant-like,
And he never stopped to gossip when we met him on a
hike;
He lived a year amongst us ere we found, one summer's
day,
That he'd lit out of the country in a pussy-footed way.

The detectives, who came after, prowled around his place
a bit,
And unearthed, from out the cellar, a counterfeiter's kit;
And his blamed remittance money, that so freely he had
flung,
Had a most suspicious tinkle — and we found that we'd
been stung.

NAVAJO

Rough are the trails we follow,
  Hot are the winds we face;
Swift as the cliff-bred swallow
  Over the plains we race;
Out of the hills, low-lying,
  Ride we a thousand strong;
Hark, on the breezelet dying,
  Unto the herdsmen's song.

Over parched water-courses,
  Scars in the desert's breast,
Swiftly we urge our horses,
  Putting the wind to test;
Now through the mountain passes,
  White with eternal snow,
Then deep in prairie grasses,
  So ride the Navajo.

Far are the fires that twinkle,
  Calling us always home;
Faint are the bells that tinkle,
  There where our sheep-bands roam;

Let the black night entrap us,
Veiling her stars in rain;
Slumber shall e'er enwrap us —
Bedouins of the plain.

THE SANTA FÉ TRAIL

It winds o'er prairie and o'er crest,
And tracks of steel now glance
Where once it lured men to the West,
The highway of Romance.

Its furrows now are overgrown
With snowdrift or with flower;
Lost are the graves so thickly sown
By Death in that dim hour.

But when the night has drawn its veil
The teams plod, span on span,
And one sees o'er the long dead trail
A ghostly caravan.

THE CATTLE RUSTLERS

The spirit that lived in old Sherwood's lanes
In the days of bold Robin Hood,
Is living to-day on the lonely plains
In the camp of the Never-Be-Good.

We come when we will, and go where we please,
And we levy a heavy toll;
We're free as the wind that blows through the trees
On the crown of yon Dead Man's Knoll.

We are kin to the wolf who fares on his quest,
And picks the herd's pride for his kill;
We dine on the fattest and saddle the best,
And what man shall render a bill?

The trail to our stronghold is steep and rough —
It is not for strange feet to roam;
So follow it not — let a hint be enough —
Lest you find not the back trail home!

THE TRAIL BOND

They have seen the storm-clouds marshaled above the spirelike peak,
They have felt the stinging North wind 'twixt canyon walls, bare, bleak;
For they have trod those backgrounds where dim are human trails,
And bound are they as brothers in a bond that never fails.

They have marked the trembling vision in the desert's upper air,
Where life is prone and swooning in the desert's furnace-glare;
And some of them were silenced, and slept as weary should,
But those to-day who answer are souls in brotherhood.

The bond that ties the trailmen has lashed them heart to heart;
No ritual contains it — there is no actor's part;
No man has ever voiced it, yet strong the spell it lays
Upon the spirits, daring, that thread the unblazed ways.

AT THE CLIFF DWELLING

Like swallow's nest, upon the wall,
It overlooks the canyon vast;
No more the laughing children call —
No water-carriers file past.

Yet here, upon the rock's warm face,
Where many thousand suns have smiled,
One finds of life a startling trace —
The palm-print of a little child.

A roguish jest, beyond all doubt —
The imprint of a painted hand,
And then a merry, ringing shout
That broke the calm of Mesa-Land.

The swallowlike abode is drear —
A nest from which the birds have flown —
But through the ages, bright and clear,
The hand-print lingers on the stone.

And on the winding rocky stair
One pauses, startled at the sight,
As though the hand that put it there
Had reached out of eternal night.

THE SEAGULLS OF SALT LAKE

The desert hush is on all things —
  One hears no crash of breakers wild —
And yet, what mean these circling wings
  Against the blue arch, undefiled?

How came, and when, these wand'rers bold,
  Unto this dead sea of the plain,
Far from the whitened crests that rolled
  Upon wide sands, and rolled again?

Yet here those wings flashed ceaselessly
  When, awestruck and with shortened breath,
The first white trapper wonderingly
  Gazed on the white-edged Lake of Death.

IN MESA-LAND

In Mesa-Land the sand dunes stretch afar,
The rattler basks unhindered in the sun,
And there are battlements that hint of war,
And, in the gorges, sullen rivers run.

Aye, there are battlements, from whose high walls
A Front-de-Bœuf might send his challenge down,
But silence reigns, and no portcullis falls —
Unbroken is the desert's somber frown.

In Mesa-Land the cloud-ships 'gainst the blue,
Are white as any sail viewed from the strand,
And all the peace of years envelops you
In Mesa-Land.

THE FOREST FIRE

The smoke-clouds roll like an angry flood
Down the mountain's pine-clad side;
The sky to-night will be red as blood,
And where is the deer to hide?
The crash of the blazing trees is heard,
But the voice of the flames dulls all
And smothers the call of the circling bird
Like the roar of a waterfall.

The red sparks flutter abreast the breeze,
Each one like a demon a-wing;
The bull elk staggers, with trembling knees,
To the fork where the trout streams sing;
No foaming torrent the flames can stay,
And they rush like relentless fate,
While the charred pine-trunks in the ashes gray
Show a forest made desolate.

But green, 'neath the sun and silver stars,
Shall the mountain gleam anew,
For a carpet of pines shall cover the scars
Where the flame god's hosts marched through;

And thus it is that the hearts of men,
When swept by the flames of woe,
'Neath Time's kind touch shall bloom again,
And shall greater beauties show.

TRAIL SONG

The lead horse bends to the task, full strong,
And the others follow fast;
The saddle creaks with an endless song,
In the ears of him who's last:
Climb, climb,
Nor waste your time,
For steep is the trail 'neath the peak sublime.

The iron clatters upon the stones,
And fast the red sparks fly;
Down in the depths the pine-tree moans
In the winds that hurry by;
Speed, speed,
Urge weary steed,
For the canyon yawns below in greed.

Now the pack is loosed in the friendly glade —
The camp-fire smoke curls high;
And soon has the trailman's bed been made
Beneath a star-gemmed sky;
Rest, rest,
Peace in your breast,
No harm shall you find at the mountain's crest.

THE FIRE-FIGHTERS

"WHERE's Smith and Hennessy, Edwards, Stowe —
Where's Casey and Link and Small?"
The ranger listened, and murmured low;
"They're missing, Chief — that's all.

'Where the smoke rolls high, I saw them ride —
They waved good-bye to me;
Good God! they might as well have tried
To put back the rolling sea.

"I rode for aid till my horse fell dead,
Then waded the mountain stream;
The pools I swam were red, blood-red,
And covered with choking steam.

"There was never a comrade to shout 'Hello,'
Though I flung back many a call;
The brave boys knew what it meant to go —
They're missing, Chief — that's all."

THE GEYSERS OF THE YELLOWSTONE

WHAT Tantalus is chained below,
To sigh thus through the years —
To voice, in thund'rous groans, its woe
And damp the earth with tears?
Those tears, like spindrift, winds have thrown
Along the gleaming Yellowstone.

What mighty power is surging here
Beneath earth's trembling crust,
And sends those columns, white and clear,
Above the dazzling dust?
But Time shall answer — Time alone —
The riddle of the Yellowstone.

The clouds shall gather overhead
As in dim ages past;
The lightning flash shall oft be sped
And storms shall fill the vast;
Still shall they mock the thunder-tone —
The geysers of the Yellowstone.

THE DUDE-WRANGLER

Bring me some good red likker — the kind that smokes in the glass;
I've been herdin' a dood from Boston in camp on Yellerstone Pass;
A dood with a little green sky-piece, and ridin'-school boots and pants;
I'm quittin' the game, Mr. Barkeep — it don't give my nerves a chance.

He was allus lost in the sagebrush, when he was n't in trouble in camp;
He was skeered to stay out in the evenin', lest his mail-order clothes 'd get damp;
He thought that a wolf was howlin' when he heard an old pack-hoss neigh,
And he tumbled off 'n his bronco at least twenty times a day.

So gimme a jolt of the red stuff — the kind with a fight in each glass;
I've close-herded all I'm goin' to this dood from the tall green grass;

I'm back to the steers and the round-up, so jest watch me
hit the breeze;
Compared with this tenderfoot nursin', cowpunchin' 's a
life of ease.

THE OLD YALLER SLICKER

The old yaller slicker's the cowpuncher's friend —
His saddle is never without it —
It's rolled in a bundle and tied at each end,
But it's ready for service, don't doubt it.

When the sun bathes the hills in a dazzling glow
Across which the cloud shadows flicker,
Then the night-herd's asleep, where the round-up tents show,
With his head on his old yaller slicker.

But in days when the rain drives aslant o'er the range,
And the far hills the storm king is hiding,
Then the old yaller slicker gleams ghostlike and strange
Where the tireless cowboy is riding.

Oh, it's wrinkled and torn, and it never looks new —
In the town it would stir up a snicker —
But the style can go hang — it's a friend tried and true,
Is the cowpuncher's old yaller slicker.

OCTOBER ON THE SHEEP RANGE

THERE ain't no leaves to turn to gold —
  There ain't a tree in sight —
In other ways the herder's told
  October's come, all right.

Jest like ten thousand souls, all lost,
  The wind howls — ain't it nice! —
The water-hole is froze acrost
  With crinkly-crackly ice.

The sheep bed down before the sun
  Has hit the rim of hills;
The prairie wolves are on the run
  To make their nightly kills.

But kyards are sayin', "Solitaire,"
  The bacon's fryin' prime;
The old sheep wagon's free from care
  In late October time.

THE HERMIT

He watches where the wild deer drink,
He hears the bull elk's echoing call;
And, where the evening shadows fall,
He sees the mountain lion slink.

No pulsing artery of steel,
That leads unto the distant town,
Has lured him from the peaks that crown
The groves where Nature's voices peal.

He gazes on a granite sea -
Grim hills by giant hands uptossed —
All sense of time has long been lost,
The days have merged so silently.

No fear he knows — no childish dread —
So shall he gaze, with eyes serene,
When, from the woods of changeless green,
Death stalks him with a catlike tread.

WATERING THE TRAIL HERD

The sand dunes stand, 'mid desert sheen,
And glare back at the sun,
But at their feet a fringe of green
Tells us our goal is won.

The cattle, standing in the stream,
Have slaked their burning thirst;
Drink deep — for we must turn where gleam
More pulsing sands accurst.

Drink deep — the trail still leads afar
Across a treeless plain,
And some shall die where vultures are,
Nor feel the blessed rain.

The shifting sands their bones shall hide
Upon the desert way;
All other streams, we hear, have dried —
And so drink deep to-day!

THE CLIFF DWELLING

On the cold, gray wall of the canyon deep,
It hangs, like a great bird's nest;
And threadlike trails, rock-strewn and steep,
Lead one from the stream's unrest;
The crumbled walls stand in the sun,
As laid by the cliffman's kind —
When you and I our tasks have done
Shall we leave as much behind?

The pine-trees fall in the winter's blast,
And the deep snows melt in the spring,
But still the ancient home stands fast
And its walls to the canyon cling;
And the footprints stay on the narrow trails
That high on the grim walls wind —
When you and I have told our tales
Shall we leave as much behind?

In the house, as a sacred thing apart,
A sketch shows through the stain;
It tells of the struggling thing called Art
That lived in the cliffman's brain;

Nor smoke nor age can the lines efface,
And they stand forth, as when designed —
When you and I have yielded place
Shall we leave as much behind?

THE CAMEL RIDE OF ARROYO AL

With an old, goat-whiskered burro, that had seen a better day,
I was prospectin' fer pockets, down around Death Valley way;
I had run plumb out of flour — had no bacon left to fry —
When that burro had the meanness to hee-haw twice and die.

I was twenty miles from water, and about a block from hell;
Fer a man'd soon strike sulphur if he tried to dig a well;
But I walked along the desert till my head begun to ring,
And the heat made me so locoed I cut loose and tried to sing.

But I stopped my crazy racket, fer, right before my eyes,
I saw two meek-faced camels — beasts of reg'lar side-show size;
I thought at first I'd dreamed 'em, in my own light-headed fix,
But I saw, on creepin' closer, that they was n't desert tricks.

I remembered then about 'em — how the Gov'ment tried
its hand
At breedin' Eastern camels in this far-off Western land;
And those must have been the remnants o' that herd o'
Uncle Sam's,
A-lyin' there, contented as a brace o' new-born lambs.

Well, I roped one o' the critters, and I snubbed him round
a rock,
And I lashed myself upon him, when I'd tied him, head to
hock;
Then I cut the ropes that bound him, and he lit out
somethin' grand,
Like a red-hot streak o' lightnin' across the white-hot sand.

Well, I rode a day upon him 'fore he stopped to take a rest,
And he carried me to snow-line, on a far-off mountain crest;
And we both drunk melted snowballs, and then my hump-
backed steed
Said "Adoo," and sought the desert, while I hunted home
and feed.

ARROYO AL'S ANTEDILUVIAN BRONCO

I WAS out a-ridin' fences, on the Freeze-Out Mountain Range,
When I had a night's experience that I call most weird and strange;
I was sleepin' near Bone Cabin, where the hills are red as blood —
It's where the college experts find them beasts that beat the flood.

I was wakened, 'long at midnight, by a most onearthly sound,
And I found my bronk had bolted — yanked his stake-pin from the ground;
'T was a sure onholy racket, and my flowin' locks they riz,
And I felt like that there Hamlet when his blood stood still and friz.

Well, the moon was shinin', pale-like, and I saw a mighty shape
A-loomin' right before me — and there were n't no escape;

It was broad as this here bunkhouse, and was twict as long,
at least —
A bone-digger 's since told me 't were a dinosaurus beast.

Well, I saw there were n't no runnin' that would make a
getaway,
So I walked up to the critter — fer I'd drunk a few that
day —
And I yelled jest like a foreman, and he knelt down in his
track,
And I climbed up on a boulder and then swung off on his
back.

So I rode off in the moonlight, on my Stone-Age saddle
horse,
And I put him through his paces, like a racer on the
course;
I quirted him and spurred him, and I wished I had my
rope
Fer to snub a maverick or two when goin' on a lope.

I rode till blamed near daylight, when my steed begins to
buck,
And, havin' nary saddle, gettin' throwed was jest my
luck;

No, I could n't dream this story, fer when I waked up there
I was jest a hundred miles from where I 'd said my evenin' prayer!

THE BALLAD OF PRUE PERKINS

Miss Prue Priscilla Perkins was a prim New England
maid,
And she never had a suitor since her hair came out of
braid,
Though she looked like Dresden china, when in Sunday
best arrayed.

But Prue went West one summer, and she proudly wrote
her name
On a stake upon the prairie, where the wild sunflowers
flame,
And she built a paintless dwelling on a treeless, manless
claim.

It was n't long, it happens, ere the news was spread broad-
cast,
And the cowboys came to view her — and they came a-rid-
ing fast —
And Miss Prue, who 'd had no suitors, said: "The tide has
turned at last!"

Now ponies cluster Sundays round the Perkins ranch-house
small,
And the Perkins parlor bursteth with admirers who call,
And a ticket to New England would n't please Miss Prue
at all!

PROSPECTING TIME

It's time to pack the bacon and the flour and the beans —
It's time to roll the tarpaulin and choose a suit of jeans;
The big snow-caps have melted, and the streams are calling
clear,
It's time to go a-prospecting — to wander far from here.

It's time to bring the burro from his grazing on the hill —
There's more grass in the mountains where the cuss can eat
his fill;
It's time to get the hob-nails, and to oil the mountain
boots;
There's gold there on the hillsides — it beckons at grass
roots.

It's time to leave the highway, and to wander up the trail —
To start again the questing of the hearts that never fail;
It's time to build a fire on the heights at timber-line;
We can find good health, my partners, if we never find a
mine.

THE OLD TRAPPER SPEAKS

You are clever, they're telling me, youngster,
With your traps and your poisoned bait;
You travel the plains in a wagon —
We hoofed it with cautious gait;
You sleep every night under canvas,
You've comforts galore when you halt —
But could you take traps and your rifle
And live for a year without salt?

You have kettles and pans — and your wagon
Resembles a grocery store;
We had to depend on our powder
For grub and the clothes that we wore;
You set up your tent in the open —
To us every shadow cried "Halt!"
Could you half-roast your kill, like an Injun,
And live for a year without salt?

You are skillful, no doubting it, youngster,
But would your skill answer their test?
Would you hazard your life on one bullet
With a savage's knife at your breast?

Those were giants — those hunters of beaver,
Whose bravery rose to a fault.
Could you turn to a land that was trailless
And live, as they lived, without salt?

THE FORESTER'S RETURN

I'm back on the job by the singing river,
Far from the town with its money-mad,
Back where the quaking aspens quiver —
And I'm glad.

I'm back to the place where the trail is winding
'Mid flowers of every scent and hue,
And I felt, when I gazed, the hot tears blinding —
Would n't you?

I'm back to the creak of the good old saddle,
To the equine friends that never doubt;
Back to the haunts — with canoe and paddle —
Of the trout.

There's work to do, and there's work in plenty,
And it's sleep in the open, if fate so wills,
But no man is more than one-and-twenty
In the hills.

THE PROSPECTORS' HOMING

THEY'RE coming in across the hills —
The prospectors' brigade;
The Jacks and Toms and Neds and Bills
From peak and gulch and glade,
They've all come back with tales to tell,
And some red gold will bring;
The lads that, when the first buds swell,
Are leaving in the spring.

Their boots strike fire from the stones,
As they swing down the trail;
From out the Great Divide's grim cones
They come with merry hail;
The burros walk at swifter pace —
The keen air grows more cold;
Thus ends the Westland's yearly race
For Nature's hidden gold.

They come from out the silent seas,
Where waves of rock ne'er break;
They've dwelt among great mysteries,
By mountain, stream, and lake;

The seacoast city, salt and damp,
Has hardy souls that roam,
But what can match the mining camp
When the prospectors come home?

THE WATER-HOLE

The buzzard floats above it, wings aslant —
  His feasts are those who perish at the brink —
And, far off where the dying cattle pant,
  Like shadows do the desert skulkers slink.

Like burnished copper in a molten sky,
  The sun has shone upon it through the day,
And toward it, o'er the reaches hot and dry,
  The creatures of the wild have dragged their way.

Upon its edge, amongst the footprints there,
  One reads with ease, upon the whitened slope,
The story of each fight against despair,
  And how, at last, have man and beast found hope.

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